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**CONTACT:** Matthew Monica  
(305) 325-2501

## PRESS RELEASE

### **STATE REPRESENTATIVE LUIS R. GARCIA, JR. FILES HOUSE BILL 4075 TO REPEAL THE ARBITRARY DANGEROUS DOG DESIGNATION**

**TALLAHASSEE, Fla.** – State Representative Luis R. Garcia, Jr. (D-Miami) has filed legislation to stop the arbitrary euthanizing of innocent canines simply because the dogs had the terrible misfortune of being confiscated from a property where illegal dog fighting took place.

House Bill 4075 would assist canines that are victims of cruelty once they have been taken from properties where animal fighting has taken place. Under the legislation, a seized canine would have a better chance of adoption and survival. A companion bill is expected to be filed soon in the state Senate.

Current law states that dogs seized from property used for illegal fighting are to be deemed dangerous, which makes adoption of these dogs nearly impossible.

HB 4075 would repeal the arbitrary dangerous designation and allow local authorities the option to conduct behavioral evaluations to determine if any of the dogs can be adopted or rehabilitated. Most states do not arbitrarily deem victims of cruelty as dangerous.

“As we have seen from the Michael Vick case, as well as other cases, many dogs seized in these busts can make good pets. Some former fighting dogs have even gone on to be therapy dogs for nursing homes and hospice centers,” said Representative Luis Garcia, (D-Miami), sponsor of the bill.

The legislation is supported by Best Friends Animal Society, a national companion animal rescue and advocacy group. Ledy Vankavage, senior legislative attorney for Best Friends, stated “The automatic deeming of all dogs seized from property used for fighting penalizes the canine victims. This means that all puppies, bait dogs, and breeding dogs that are seized are destroyed. All dogs are individuals and should be judged by their behavior not breed or where they are housed. Florida is one of only a handful of states that automatically declares these victims as dangerous resulting in a death sentence.”

Many Florida animal control agencies have expressed support for HB 4075, as it will allow those agencies to take a more humane approach with the abused dogs.

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